

Under the framework provided by this legislation, States like Wisconsin would have the opportunity to implement programs like the Wisconsin W-2 program without the necessity of securing numerous waivers from the requirements of current law. Indeed, passage of this measure will render moot much of the need for the current voluminous waiver application filed by the State of Wisconsin earlier this year which has caused much controversy. Although some aspects of the W-2 program, particularly those dealing with Medicaid services, may still require review by HHS, the block grant authority provided for under this legislation is designed to allow the broad flexibility and State control needed to implement State initiated welfare reform programs.

As a former State legislator myself, I have a good deal of respect for the desire of State and local officials to reform this system and help break the cycle of poverty for low-income families. I believe that there need to be certain underlying protections that are national in scope. For example, I believe civil rights protections must be uniform throughout our Nation to assure that the guarantees of our Federal Constitution are extended to all citizens, regardless of their place of residence. I also believe that where Federal funds are being expended, the Federal Government has an obligation to impose certain requirements that should be universal. But States should have sufficient flexibility to design how services are actually provided to allow them the opportunity to try out new ideas and approaches.

For these reasons, I voted last September for the Senate-passed welfare reform bill; at that time, however, I indicated that if the bill returned from conference with punitive, inequitable provisions, I would withdraw my support. Unfortunately, the conference returned a bill which incorporated provisions that were simply unacceptable. The bipartisan welfare reform measure that the Senate had crafted was discarded in favor of a measure based upon the House-passed bill, which was punitive in nature rather than focused upon helping families move from welfare to the workforce. I therefore voted against that measure.

I am pleased to say that the Senate, over the course of this debate, has crafted a measure which will make fundamental changes in the Federal role in the welfare area and at the same time has rejected various provisions which would be harmful to those most in need. The Senate has addressed several important issues and corrected some of the flaws in the legislation.

First, in the area of child care, the Senate bill provides more resources for child care services than contained in the bill we passed last fall. Specifically, the bill increases funding for child care services by almost \$6 billion to \$13.8 billion from \$8 billion contained in last year's bill. The Senate

also adopted Senator DODD's amendment by a vote of 96 to 0 which reinstated critical health and safety standards for licensed child care facilities.

Second, by adopting the Chafee-Breaux amendment relating to Medicaid coverage for needy children, the Senate provided a critical safety net. As we endeavor to reform cash grant programs, it is important that access to medical care is not inadvertently sacrificed. The Chafee-Breaux amendment reestablished these protections. Had Chafee-Breaux not been adopted, I would not have been able to accept this bill.

Third, the Senate bill retains a State maintenance of effort requirement at 80 percent of the 1994 contribution. That is the provision the Senate adopted last fall which was unfortunately diluted in the conference version. Restoration of this provision was also key for me. Without such a maintenance of effort requirement, Federal dollars would simply replace State contributions and States like Wisconsin which make substantial contributions to investing in welfare programs would have simply seen their dollars shifted to States which fail to make these kinds of commitments from their State treasuries.

I am also pleased that the Senate struck the language providing for imposition of a family cap which would prohibit States from providing assistance for children born while a family is on welfare. This is another example of where the conference report that the President vetoed contained language that had been rejected by the Senate. Moreover, the bill that was presented to the Senate last week contained this unfortunate language. However, this family cap language was struck by a Byrd point of order.

The Senate also wisely adopted the Conrad amendment that struck provisions that would have allowed block granting of food stamps. Food stamps have been the mainstay of many families who have been thrown into dire circumstances because of a sudden job loss, an unexpected illness that has sidelined the family breadwinner, or other family misfortunes. Although the bill provides strong work incentives to make sure that individuals receiving these benefits are working toward self-sufficiency, it no longer allows this safety net program to be withdrawn entirely from needy families.

Mr. President, although the Senate rejected many onerous amendments and provisions, there remain provisions in the bill that I don't support.

This is not a reform bill that I would have drafted if I had been the author.

I believe the immigration provisions are too harsh and fail to provide the kind of balanced response that we strived to achieve in the immigration reform legislation now pending in conference. While I support the concept of deeming, the kind of absolute ban on assistance for many legal immigrants which is contained in this bill is not

carefully tailored to preserve scarce resources while still providing humane, essential services to those individuals who have come to this country legally.

I am concerned that the Senate narrowly rejected the Ford amendment which would have allowed States to provide noncash vouchers to provide services for children when their families reached the 5-year time limit of eligibility for cash assistance. I have repeatedly voted to support allowing vouchers in such circumstances. I think it is a reasonable response to make sure that young children are not denied basic support when their parents fail to make the transition into the work force within the designated time period. I recognize that the bill allows a State to exempt 20 percent of their caseloads from the time-limit provisions, but I do not believe that this is adequate protection for the children involved.

I also fear that the level of cuts in food stamp funds may be too deep, and will hurt needy families. These cuts may need to be revisited, either in conference or in other legislation.

I remain uncertain about ultimate wisdom of terminating our 60-year Federal commitment of a guaranteed Federal safety net for young children. The Senator from New York [Mr. MOYNIHAN] has been an eloquent leader in articulating the dangers of eliminating this entitlement protection for needy children and replacing it with a patchwork quilt of State programs. Clearly, there will be States that will fail to use this opportunity to enact real welfare reform measures and instead, pursue punitive measures designed to stigmatize those who seek welfare assistance in times of need. Children in these States will be harmed by not having the Federal safety net that exists today in the AFDC program. On the other hand, if a number of the States use this opportunity to help devise effective ways to help families move out of welfare and into the work force, many children will benefit from the higher incomes and better opportunities they will have.

We are faced with a difficult choice, Mr. President. On the one hand, children are hurt by the current system; yet, many may be hurt by the loss of this Federal safety net. The bill does contain assessment provisions that will allow Congress to make changes, if necessary, if eliminating the entitlement under Federal law causes undue hardships. I think those of us who vote for this experiment need to watch carefully how it is implemented and be prepared to take action if the results fall short of what we hope will occur.

Mr. President, as I said at the outset, I am voting for this bill because we cannot continue the current system. I am hopeful that the States will seize this opportunity to develop approaches that will help welfare recipients and their families become economically self-sufficient, rather than punishing those who fall through the system. I